

Good Beginnings program gets donation of half a million diapers

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Sullivan County families can count on 500,000 diapers to fill their diaper bags after a massive donation to Good Beginnings was unloaded from a 53-foot truck that traveled from Burlington Friday morning.

The diapers, which were considered too flawed for Seventh Generation, a nontoxic and environmentally safe household products producer, to sell in stores were trucked into the Lacrosse Building, where they will be stored for the next nine months in Rondo Music.

While the donation enables services across the county to meet the demands for child care assistance, it also plugs in holes where other service programs are weaker.

"This is a need in every community in this country because food stamps do not cover the cost of paper prod-

ucts," said Ellie Tsetsi, executive director for Good Beginnings of Sullivan County. "You can't do without them if you have a young child."

Tsetsi said the expense for diapers costing about \$14 a package can essentially make or break a family's income when a child becomes sick and goes through more diapers than usual.

"You just can't totally plan this out," she said.

Then add in the ever-increasing prices to heat homes and fuel cars and it is certain these circumstances weigh heavily on struggling families. Part of the solution is donations such as these, which Tsetsi feels can help eliminate some of the stress on families.

"This one way, just one way maybe, we can help relieve their burden," she said.

Tsetsi heard about the diaper donation when a son of the executive director for Good Beginnings in Central

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Vermont was in Burlington helping a friend on his home.

Rumor spread the diapers were headed for the dump and he intervened, phoning his mother, who then phoned Tsetsi and the deal was set — two trucks to Sullivan County and one truck to Central Vermont.

"It's an interesting story of connections," she said.

Fifty-eight pallets later, and Rondo Music began filling up with pallets stacked with cases of diapers. And even though the diapers are shrinking his storage space, Kurt Zentmaier, the owner of Rondo Music, said he is more than happy to help.

"Much like these diapers it's a space that would have gone to waste," he said. "It's a business-friendly town and that kind of

allowed this to happen."

Inmates from the House of Corrections in Unity were on hand to help unload the truck and move the pallets from the loading dock to the second floor.

"It's a way to give back to the community," said officer Ken Howard, the community corrections officer for Sullivan County Department of Corrections.

Incorporating inmates into community work detail helps from all angles. Donors such as Zentmaier won't need to tie up too much of their manpower and inmates are slowly integrated back into the community.

"This program has a lot of unseen effects," Howard said about the HOC community corrections program.

Without donations from com-

panies such as Seventh Generation, which shipped the diapers to Buffalo from Burlington to tag them as defects and sent them down to Claremont, programs such as Good Beginnings might not be as far along in their efforts.

In the future, Tsetsi hopes to build a community diaper bank that would house more than the size 3 diapers that were donated. Still, she is grateful for what she got.

"It's really an absolute blessing because it's a struggle," Tsetsi said.

More information on Good Beginnings can be found at www.goodbeginnings.net.

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